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ABSTRACT

Examination of literature related to attitude theory, attitude development and change, attitudes and school achievement, and attitudes and their relationship to behavior reveals the following: (1) attitudes are learned predispositions to respond toward attitude objects; (2) because they are learned, attitudes are subject to change; and (3) even though the relationship between attitude and behavior may not be causative, it may be facilitative. Further review of literature pertaining to disadvantaged youth and attitudes toward vocational education reveals that disadvantaged youth, by nature of their disadvantagement, may have attitudes which do not allow them to consider vocational education as a viable alternative to other high school programs. Knowing the magnitude and direction of the attitudes of disadvantaged youth can be the first step in nurturing positive attitudes toward vocational education. However, the limited research concerning attitudes of disadvantaged youth toward vocational education is not conclusive enough to determine if it is their attitudes that are preventing them from enrolling in vocational education programs. (MN)

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Attitudes, the Disadvantaged and Vocational Education

by

Robert Vos

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ATTITUDES, the DISADVANTAGED, and VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Literature and research considered relevant to this study are presented in three major sections. These sections are as follows:

1. Literature related to attitude theory, attitude development and change, attitudes and school achievement, and attitudes and their relationship to behavior.

2. Literature related to disadvantaged youth.

3. Literature related to attitudes toward vocational education.

Attitudes

To understand the term "attitude," the following definitions are presented:

> An attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. (Allport, 1967, p. 8)

> A learned implicit response that varies in intensity and tends to "mediate" or guide an individual's more overt evaluative responses to an object or concept. (Fishbein, 1967, p. 389)

> A relatively enduring system of evaluative, affective reactions based upon and reflecting the evaluative concepts of beliefs which have been learned about the characteristics of a social object or class of social objects. (Shaw & Wright, 1967, p. 3)

> An attitude is a set of interrelated predispositions to respond. (Rokeach, 1972, p. 119)
>
> An implicit. drive producing response considered socially significant in the individual's society. (Doob, 1967, p. 43)
>
> An attitude is an idea charged with emotion which predisposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations. (Triandis, 1971, p. 2)
>
> Attitudes are learned predispositions to respond to an object in a favorable way. (Fishbein, 1967, p. 257)
>
> A state of readiness, a tendency to act or react in a certain manner when confronted with certain stimuli. (Oppenheim, 1966, p. 104)

Although there is, no doubt, a definition for attitude for every author who has written about attitudes, there are certain communalities within each definition. Khan and Weiss (1973) point out:

> Despite the many ways in which attitudes are defined, the communality among the various definitions is illustrated by noting that attitudes are selectively acquired and integrated through learning and experience; that they are enduring dispositions indicating response consistency; and that positive or negative affect toward a social or psychological object represents the salient characteristic of an attitude. (p. 761)

Put more simply, an attitude could be defined as a learned, enduring, consistent predisposition to respond in a certain manner toward an attitude object.

Many attitude theorists suggest that attitudes are composed of three major components: affective, cognitive, and behavioral (Borg, 1971; Rokeach, 1972; Triandis, 1971). The affective component may be described as the individual's feeling or emotion about the attitude object, the cognitive component consists of the individual's knowledge

about the attitude object, and the behavioral component is the individual's predisposition to action.

Still others believe in the unidimensional approach which describes an attitude as the tendency to evaluate an object or construct in positive or negative terms. The definition provided by Thurstone (1946) illustrates this approach:

> The intensity of positive or negative affect for or against a psychological object. A psychological object is any symbol, person, phrase, slogan, or idea toward which people can differ as regards positive or negative affect. (p. 39)

Attitudes are said to be evaluative and to have an object.

Attitudes serve a very important function for people in that they help us to adjust to our environment by providing a certain amount of predictability and by making it easier to get along with others who have similar attitudes. People have attitudes because they:

> a) help them understand the world around them, by organizing and simplifying a very complex input from their environment; b) protect their self-esteem, by making it possible for them to avoid unpleasant truths about themselves; c) help them adjust in a complex world, by making it more likely that they will react so as to maximize their rewards from the environment; and d) allow them to express their fundamental values. (Triandis, 1971, p. 4)

Shaw and Wright (1967) identify six characteristics that may help to describe the nature of attitudes:

> 1. Attitudes are based upon evaluating concepts regarding characteristics of the referent object and give rise to motivated behavior.
> 2. Attitudes are construed as varying in quality and intensity (or strength) on a continuum from positive through neutral to negative.
> 3. Attitudes are learned, rather than being innate

or a result of constitutional development and maturation.

4. Attitudes have specific social referents, or specific classes thereof.

5. Attitudes possess varying degrees of interrelatedness to one another.

6. Attitudes are relatively stable and enduring. (pp. 6-9)

Scott (1968) identifies eight characteristics of attitudes that can be measured. They are summarized as follows:

1. Direction--indicating positive or negative feelings regarding an object.

2. Magnitude--the degree of favorableness or unfavorableness.

3. Intensity--the "strength of feeling" associated with the attitude.

4. Ambivalence--a situation in which the subject has both favorable and unfavorable attitudes.

5. Salience/Centrality--the prominence of an attitude, i.e., one by which an individual guides a major proportion of his/her behavior.

6. Affective Salience--refers to how emotional an individual becomes about a particular attitude.

7. Flexibility--the ease with which an attitude can be varied or modified.

8. Imbeddedness--the degree of isolation versus connectedness (with other attributes of an attitude).

One can see from this list that it would be difficult to operationalize the measurement of attitudes considering all of the above characteristics. In the literature, the greatest attention has been given to the direction of the attitude and its magnitude (or intensity).

Recognizing that attitudes are a learned response toward an attitude object we must realize that as educators we are influencing a student's affective and cognitive attitude components. Because attitudes can be positive or negative it is important for educators to learn what a

student's attitudes toward an attitude object are, how they are affecting these attitudes, and how positive attitudes can be nurtured. To learn how we are influencing their attitudes, we must learn the direction and magnitude of these attitudes.

In this study, the researcher will attempt to determine the direction and magnitude of the attitude toward vocational education.

Attitude Development and Change

Attitudes develop quite early in childhood as a result of interaction with others, experiences, and formal learning. As early as age one, a child is capable of affective responses toward attitude objects. These responses are generally approach-avoidance responses toward persons, objects, and situations. Theorists hypothesize a rapid growth of attitudes during infancy and childhood with less rapid growth in adolescence and small changes in adulthood (Khan & Weiss, 1973; Remmers, 1954).

> Almost all writers, no matter what their bias, agree that attitudes are learned. If this is so, then the learning, retention, and decline of an attitude are no different from the learning of a skill, a piece of prose, or a set of nonsense syllables. (Doob, 1967, p. 42).

Morrissette (1958) has shown that one forms attitudes that are consistent with one's other feelings and information. Festinger, Riecken, and Schachter (1956) showed that one's attitudes are consistent with one's perception of reality.

A child entering school has already acquired

desirable and undesirable attitudes. One of the major tasks of the school becomes one of changing undesirable attitudes, reinforcing desirable ones, and providing learning experiences for the development of new attitudes (Khan & Weiss, 1973).

If attitudes are learned, then attitudes should be capable of being changed. According to Fishbein's (1967) theory on the relations between beliefs and attitude,

> attitude change will occur when: (1) an individual's beliefs about an object change and/or (2) when the evaluative aspect of beliefs about an object change. It should be noted that beliefs about an object may change in two ways: (1) new beliefs may be learned, that is, new concepts may be related to the attitude object, new stimulus-response associations may be learned and (2) the strength of already held beliefs may change, that is, the position of beliefs in the habit-family hierarchy may be altered through positive or negative reinforcement. . . . The amount and direction of attitude change will be a function of (1) the individual's initial attitude and, thus the number, strength, and evaluative aspects of his salient beliefs, and (2) the number, strength and evaluative aspects of the new beliefs he learns. (p. 397)

Two types of attitude change have been identified by Kretch, Crutchfield, and Ballachey (1962). An attitude change is considered "congruent" if the change is in the direction of the existing attitude and "incongruent" if the change is in the direction opposite the existing attitude. They hypothesize that it is more difficult to produce an incongruent change than a congruent change. The extent to which a person's attitudes are changeable depends largely on how they were acquired and their immediate relationship to the person. Attitudes based on home or religious training and

those that involve self-perceptions are generally more stable and therefore more difficult to change than attitudes toward objects not related to one's self (Bloom, 1964).

Triandis (1971) sums up a discussion of attitude change as follows:

> In order to change someone's attitudes, it is a good idea to analyze the functions they play and to adjust your strategy accordingly. Attitude change is a little like medicine--the same therapy is not prescribed for all ailments; nor is the same approach used for every attitude to be changed. (p. 144)

Weisman (1976), in a discussion concerning the retention of special groups in vocational education, suggests that attitude change is not something that can be accomplished easily or independently of training. He states:

> Cultural attitudes toward school, learning in general, or particular subjects influence student achievement. The process of modifying attitudes is difficult, so it is not suggested that attitudes be treated first and then the training be given. It is suggested instead that those attitudes that students already hold be utilized, in terms of vocational goals, by tying remediation to these goals. (pp. 233-234)

Recognizing that attitudes are developed early in childhood and that they are the result of many interactions and experiences should make educators aware that they are not easily changed. That there is possibility of change should provide the encouragement necessary to make that change. Knowing the attitudes of youth toward vocational education can aid educators to make sound educational choices concerning vocational programs.

Attitudes and School Achievement

Many researchers have studied the relationship of attitudes to academic success with the primary rationale being that since attitudes lend themselves to modification, positive findings could provide the basis for applying treatments that would assist in bringing about this change (Khan & Weiss, 1973). Brodin (1964) compared the achievement of 505 students who had been classified as either satisfied or dissatisfied with school. His investigation showed that the satisfied group performed better on educational tasks and tests of academic skills than the dissatisfied group.

Khan and Weiss (1973) state that the

> relationship between favorable scholastic attitudes and level of academic achievement is functional rather than causal--that is, academic success helps to promote satisfaction with school, which in turn increases the possibility of future success. (p. 770)

Khan (1969), in a study of 428 male and 456 female ninth-grade students, found a correlation of .48 to .59 and .62 and .69, respectively, between student attitudes and several achievement measures. In another study (Khan & Roberts, 1969), when standardized achievement scores in vocabulary, spelling, and arithmetic were correlated with a survey of study habits and attitudes, multiple correlations of .44 and .54 were found. In interpreting these results one must note that while a relationship has been shown it does not indicate direction of causality.

Attitudes and Their Relationship to Behavior

Attitudes are often measured in educational research because of their possible predictive value (Borg & Gall, 1971). How someone "feels" about something may or may not be reflected in their behavior however, and, similarly, because someone behaves in a particular manner does not mean we are observing that person's attitudes (Severy, 1974). Triandis (1971) states that attitudes "are neither necessary nor sufficient causes of behavior. They can be considered 'facilitative causes.'" Behavior, he continues,

> is a function of a) attitudes, b) norms, c) habits and d) expectancies about reinforcement. When all four factors are consistent there is consistency between attitudes and behavior, when the four factors are inconsistent, there is less consistency. (p. 16)

Researchers, then, should be careful in correlating behavior and attitude.

> Attitudes are but one aspect of a behavioral situation. In a vacuum, one's attitudes would lead directly to behavioral characteristics of these attitudes. However, we recognize that the social-psychological situation (environment) often impinges upon certain behavioral constraints, limitations, and/or prescriptions which do not always allow for behavior that would be perfectly reflective of a person's attitudes. (Severy, 1974, p. 2)

In measuring a person's attitude in relation to his/her behavior a researcher is measuring only one stimulus object (e.g., vocational education). When measuring a particular behavior, however, there may be many elements influencing the behavior (prestige, cost, parent's desire, etc.).

> What should be understood is this: attitudes involve what people think about, feel about, and how they would like to behave toward an attitude object. Behavior is not only determined by what people would like to do but also by what they think they should do, . . . by what they have usually done, . . . and by the expected consequences of the behavior. (Triandis, 1971, p. 14)

Although one could not definitely say that those with a positive attitude toward vocational education will enroll in vocational education programs, it might be possible to argue that those with a positive attitude would be more likely to enroll than those with a negative attitude.

Disadvantaged Youth

Of the social scientists and educators who have described the character of disadvantaged youth, most have emphasized the conditions which foster disadvantagement. The disadvantaged have been characterized through such factors as the following: poverty, unemployment, segregation, poor housing, large families, reliance on welfare, inadequate education, and attitudes of hopelessness (Feck, 1971; Passow, 1968).

The Baltimore Area Health and Welfare Council (1962) describes its disadvantaged as follows:

> Many do not understand or are not in contact with, modern urban living.
> Many are participants in subcultures, the values and customs of which are different from urban middle-class values and experiences.
> Many, particularly children and youth, suffer from the disorganizing impact of mobility, transiency, and minority group status.
> Many have educational and cultural handicaps arising from backgrounds of deprivation.
> Many are members of families with many problems: divorced, deserted, unemployed, chronically sick,

> mentally ill, retarded, delinquent.
>
> Many lack motivation or capacity to cope with their problems or to improve their situations.
>
> Most lack opportunities or motivation to become responsible citizens for the maintenance or improvement of their neighborhood or community. (p. 3)

Simply stated, the disadvantaged are "those who do not fit into the mainstream of society because of academic, social and/or economic backgrounds" (Peck, 1971, p. 1).

The school's viewpoint of disadvantaged youth is that they "exhibit the most severe scholastic retardation, the highest dropout rate (exceeding 50 per cent) [and] the least participation in higher education (probably under 5 per cent)" (Passow, 1968, p. 4). In an attempt to describe the disadvantaged student, the New York State Education Department, Bureau of Guidance, has developed the following list:

> He has an inadequate self image.
>
> He is one or more years behind his age group in school.
>
> He is frequently tardy, absent, or truant.
>
> He is unable to communicate adequately either in writing or in speaking in order to achieve school success.
>
> He is retarded in reading.
>
> He has a lack of knowledge of or feeling for school routine.
>
> He generally performs poorly on tests.
>
> He appears to be a slow learner or is an under-achiever.
>
> He is hostile to authority.
>
> He is apathetic or indifferent toward school.
>
> He fails to do homework assignments regularly.
>
> He has an anti-intellectual attitude.
>
> He has limited or unrealistic aspirations and long-term goals.
>
> He does not participate in extra-curricular activities, with some outstanding exceptions (frequently in sports) to the contrary.
>
> His parents often appear disinterested in school

> and do not come to school-related functions unless sent for. (Guidance for Educationally Disadvantaged Pupils, 1965, pp. 3, 4)

One would tend to believe from the above descriptions that disadvantaged youth can only be portrayed in negative terms; this is not true, however. Kemp (1966), in her report The Youth We Haven't Served, pointed out these characteristics for learning of disadvantaged youth:

> They are creative, motivated, and proficient in areas where their interests lie.
> They are capable of working well and hard on a specific task or assignment which has a purpose to them. . . .
> They have a capacity for close and loyal personal relationships. (p. 5)

Educators must keep in mind that all children have positive traits which can and should be nurtured.

Disadvantaged Youth Defined

Like most abstract terms in the English language, the term "disadvantaged" has more than one meaning. Each agency, whether federal, state, or local, chooses to redefine the term to suit its particular needs. There are many definitions that illustrate the usage of the term:

> Educationally deprived children are children whose educational achievement is below that normally expected of children of their age and grade, including children who are handicapped because of physical, mental, or emotional impairment. (Jensen, 1978)

> Those persons who have academic, socio-economic, cultural, or other handicaps that prevent them from participating successfully in regular vocational education programs and who require specially designed educational programs or related services. (Wall, 1974, p. 4)

> Persons (other than handicapped persons) who have

> academic or economic handicaps and who require special services and assistance in order to enable them to succeed in vocational education programs. (Educational Amendments of 1976, PL 94-482)

Many agencies and individuals choose operationally to define "disadvantaged" by providing a list of characteristics or descriptors:

> Low-level reading ability.
> Limited formal vocabulary and poor speech construction and diction.
> Relative slowness in performing intellectual tasks.
> Poor health and poor health habits.
> An anti-intellectual attitude.
> Indifference to responsibility.
> Non-purposeful experiences of the sort schools assume most of their students have had with their families. . . .
> A failure syndrome resulting from apathy and lack of self-confidence. (Kemp, 1966, p. 6)

Feck (1971), in discussing what vocational educators should know about disadvantaged youth, provides the following characteristics of these youth:

> 1. Disadvantaged youth have a better than 50-50 chance of becoming "drop-outs" by the end of the 10th grade.
> 2. Disadvantaged students frequently perform several years below grade expectancy on verbal tests, but often demonstrate normal learning potential on non-verbal tests.
> 3. Disadvantaged youth are weak in cognitive, abstract style of learning. They favor concrete, stimulus-bound learning situations.
> 4. Disadvantaged students tend to be creative and motivated and develop proficiency in areas where their interests lie.
> 5. Disadvantaged students often exhibit above average physical skill and manipulative abilities.
> 6. Disadvantaged youth are generally poorly adjusted to school, excessively truant, and cut classes frequently. (p. 12)

The New Jersey Division of Vocational Education lists the following characteristics:

Potential dropouts (including those with chronic unexcused absences and/or tardiness).

Two years below proper grade for age.

Insufficient communicative and/or computational skills for regular vocational programs.

Inability to form responsible relations with the school and/or community environment.

Other evidence of failure or factors that prevent pupils from succeeding in regular vocational programs. (Helping Educationally Disadvantaged Students Through Vocational Education, 1978, p. 2)

The following description was used to identify educationally disadvantaged youth for this study:

To qualify as an academically disadvantaged student, it must be demonstrated that the individual student is not and will not succeed in the regular educational program due to at least one of the following deficiencies:

1. Language Deficiency related to the individual's inability to communicate verbally within his environment. This deficiency may be characterized by students who have limited vocabularies, poor grammatical skills, and/or difficulties in understanding basic language.

2. Reading and/or Writing Deficiencies are observable in students who demonstrate a low ability and comprehension in reading tasks, or in their ability to communicate in writing. Similar to those cases found in language deficiencies, reading and writing skills are taught to many students as a foreign language, while others receive remedial help to upgrade their reading and/or writing skills.

3. Computational Deficiencies are characterized by students who have extreme difficulty working with mathematical and quantitative problems that are required within a normal educational program. These students will normally show a significant lack of computational skills and will not be able to maintain a degree of acceptable progress.

4. General Educational Deficiencies are related to problems that are more difficult to categorize under one or more of the above deficiencies. Typical of the traits found in students under this sub-category are low achievement scores, poor attendance records, dropout or potential dropout, no conception of educational procedures or requirements for educational success, or a lack of parental support. ("The Special Needs Learner in Industrial Arts Program," 1979, pp. 7-8)

Disadvantaged Youth and Vocational Education Legislation

Vocational education developed (1917-1963) without specific mention of the need to serve the educationally disadvantaged. It was not until the Manpower Development and Training Act of 1962 and a report of a Panel of Consultants on vocational education stated that vocational education was insensitive to labor market changes that the purpose of vocational education was reevaluated. The Declaration of Purpose of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 said, in part, that it was the responsibility of vocational education to develop new programs and serve those with special educational handicaps (PL 88-210).

The Vocational Education Act of 1963, for the first time in the history of education, allocated federal funds (10% of the basic grant) for research and demonstration purposes that specifically emphasized the needs of the handicapped and disadvantaged (PL 88-210). The expenditure was not mandatory and less than 3% of the monies were actually expended for these programs (Sikorski et al., 1976, p. 12). The turmoil of the mid-sixties created an awareness among legislators that minorities and low-income people could no longer be ignored (Lockette & Davenport, 1971). Congress, in an effort to require states to follow its 1963 recommendation, in 1968 mandated a 15% set-aside of vocational education monies to be spent on programs for disadvantaged persons. It was the intent of Congress to

enroll the disadvantaged in regular vocational education programs, modified if necessary rather than establish a dual system (Lockette & Davenport, 1971). A loophole in the law allowed states to fund programs for the disadvantaged entirely with federal funds, without state matching funds, thereby lessening the impact such programs could have had. Many states expended less for special needs persons, on the average, than on vocational education programs in general (Sikorski et al., 1976, pp. 13, 14). In 1976, the Congress again recognized the needs of disadvantaged students by mandating in the Educational Amendments of 1976 that 20% of "each State's allotment . . . be used to pay 50 per centum of the cost of vocational education for disadvantaged persons" (PL 94-482). It may be noted that the words read "50 per centum of the cost," indicating that Congress may have learned from past mistakes.

The need to provide vocational education programs for the disadvantaged has been recognized in vocational education legislation since 1963. Modest beginnings have led to a 20% set-aside in 1978. Money, however, is not enough, also necessary is the nurturing of an attitude that will allow disadvantaged youth to consider vocational education as a viable alternative to other high school programs.

Attitudes Toward Vocational Education

Although many authors have addressed the issue of a need for improved vocational education programs to

attract and hold the disadvantaged, very little research is available which might attempt to explain why present programs are unattractive to them (Black, 1976; Phillips, 1976; Sikorski et al., 1976; Weisman, 1976). Researchers have not addressed the attitudes of disadvantaged youth toward vocational education in any great number. The studies that are available are generally drawn from Job Corps or similar training programs and not vocational education, and most studies focus on the students' career aspirations and/or attitudes toward work rather than the students' perceptions of the education or training program (Sikorski et al., 1976).

It would seem reasonable that if one were to find disadvantaged youth in high-quality programs, that these programs would serve to produce positive attitudes among these youth. A 1968 analysis of 200 secondary vocational programs for minority disadvantaged youth could not identify one program as truly exemplary. Where quality programs were found they served small and homogeneous populations (Sikorski et al., 1976). A similar national study, conducted by the Massachusetts State Board (1969), also found no exemplary programs for disadvantaged youth.

Davenport and Petty (1978), in their discussion of why minority disadvantaged youth do not participate in vocational education, state that "members of minority groups tend to view vocational training as inferior to academic education" (p. 1). Davenport and Petty recognize

the value of vocational education and feel that vocational education can improve the lack of secondary education in the Black community; the income disparity between Blacks and Whites ($6,279 to $10,236 in 1970); reduce the unemployment rate for Blacks, which is consistently twice that of Whites; and reduce the high concentration of Black males in service, labor, and farm occupations.

Sikorski et al. (1976) report that the failure of researchers to consider the perceptions of the intended recipients of vocational education has caused them, at times, to misapply the results of research. Until very recently, the approach to serving the disadvantaged has been one of pouring funds into the programs without measuring the effectiveness of these programs and the views of the students or their parents regarding them. This is true even though research by Trent and Medsker (1968) has indicated that education of parents (i.e., making them aware of programs available) and encouragement on their part is a more important factor than money in determining whether students enter a particular program of study.

Vocational education has long suffered from a second-rate label. Sheldon (1970) states that:

> Vocational, technical, or occupational education is on the bottom rung of the status ladder as judged by every significant population on our campus: students, faculty, administration and parents. (p. 18)

Dobrovolony (1970) comments that:

> Too often parents and high school personnel feel that

> technical education is for someone else's children or for students at another school. The development of this attitude during the last 40 years has been predicated upon the assumption that the only way to become successful in the affluent society is to obtain a bachelor of arts or science degree. (pp. TE6-TE8)

These sentiments are echoed by Phillips (1976) who discusses the influence of this value system: "There is still present in the American educational value system which relates quality to sophistication and elevates academic skills above applied skills" (p. 24). Divine (1973) identifies two American values as being the reason for the absence of status and prestige for vocational education. The first is the idealistic attempt to prevent class distinctions within society, and the second is the status of the college degree as a sign of social achievement and distinction.

Black (1976), in a study that attempted to determine educational and school-related attitudes of Black inner-city junior high school youth and to compare these attitudes to their White counterpart, found no significant difference in attitude. He concludes that vocational education does not suffer from poor public image in the socio-economic levels studied.

Rothenberg (1972) found that there was no significant relationship between parents' attitudes toward vocational education and their children's attitudes toward vocational education. He also found that students who plan to attend a four-year college or university have

significantly less favorable attitudes toward vocational education than do students who pursue other educational endeavors following high school.

Brown (1976), in determining the attitudes of Black and non-Black ninth- and twelfth-grade vocational and non-vocational education students toward vocational education, found that race had no significant relationship in determining students' attitudes. Curriculum and grade level did seem to be dominant factors, with all students displaying more positive attitudes toward vocational education than the nonvocational education curriculum.

In a study by Sims (1972), which surveyed 219 Black parents, three-quarters of the parents said that a university education could best prepare their children with the knowledge and skills necessary for the future. Most of the parents were hoping their children will enter the professions or jobs that require high levels of skills (96% of the parents surveyed wanted their children to go to college). The Black parents surveyed viewed nonvocational education more favorably than vocational education.

Gilliland (1967) found educators had the most favorable attitudes toward vocational education, parental attitudes were slightly less favorable, and student attitudes were least favorable.

A survey of attitudes toward vocational education held by school administrators and boards of education in West Virginia revealed that:

(1) In spite of the apparent support of vocational education, the respondents indicated that they did not feel present vocational programs were effectively preparing students for today's world of work.

(2) Respondents reported that they did not feel their respective counties were providing a wide enough variety of vocational education programs to meet the diverse interest, abilities, and needs of students not going to college.

(3) A lack of sufficient money for support of vocational education was identified as the major reason why there was not more vocational education in public schools, and

(4) The respondents felt the cost of vocational education could be justified in terms of the numbers of persons it made useful members of society. (Divita, 1968)

Barlow (1965) cites that even though vocational education enrollments for all segments of the population had increased by the middle of the 20th century, many students were still denied access to vocational education because of subject matter prejudices of school teachers and administrators and to a greater extent by unrealistic parental attitudes.

In an extensive review of the literature The Participation of Minorities in Vocational Education, Manpower and Career Oriented Programs: Special Focus on Black Americans, Sheppard, Jones, and Jones (1977) draw these conclusions:

> Generally, it appears that the government has had some involvement with disadvantaged vocational training programs; however, many of the programs were instituted and discontinued in the 1960's.
>
> Black youth are generally perceived to have a negative attitude toward most vocational occupations. (p. 25)

And one of its major recommendations includes:

> Programs must be initiated or strategies be devised

> whereby black students, especially males, would come to perceive "blue collar" work as having more "worth and dignity" than they now have. (p. 26)

Sikorski et al. (1976), in their review of attitudes of disadvantaged youth toward vocational education, point out a problem many Black youth may have in selecting vocational education programs:

> The history of vocational education for minority and low income people highlights a dichotomy that is found in almost all the literature on vocational education and minorities, that between the need to provide Blacks and other ethnic minorities with job skills and the suspicion directed toward vocational programs designed specifically for minorities. The historical data shows this controversy, especially within the Black community, in the earliest history of vocational education. Further, it shows that the critics' suspicions and charges are, at least historically, justified. (p. 24)

In a study that compared disadvantaged youth in vocational and nonvocational programs, Handley (1977) showed that disadvantaged youth in vocational programs exhibited more positive concepts of themselves, more maturely developed attitudes about career choices, and more intrinsically motivated work values than disadvantaged youth in regular school curricula. The students in the vocational program displayed "attitudes characterized by more involvement with the career choice process, more positive orientations to work and more independence in decision making" (p. 6). The disadvantaged students from the vocational classes scored statistically significantly higher than the nonvocational group in the following:

> Intellectual stimulation as a work value
> Independence as a work value

> Career maturity values
> Attitudes toward self as a student
> Student perceptions of teachers, and
> Achievement as a work value. (p. 11)

Handley (1977) summarizes by stating:

> The pattern of attitudes and work values which emerged indicated that the disadvantaged youth enrolled in vocational education curricula were more motivated by the challenge, independence and achievement of future work. They also felt better about themselves as students, about teachers and about schools in general. (p. 11)

Sikorski et al. (1976) reviewed studies of occupational attitudes, aspirations, and satisfactions and studies of job-training programs and observations of vocational and career education programs. They drew the following conclusions:

> Perceptions of the target audience toward vocational education may be a function of: 1) its effectiveness in producing tangible results; 2) its interpersonal sensitivity; 3) its public image; and 4) its relevance to their occupational goals and needs. (p. 18)

Two studies that questioned vocational educators and administrators concerning reasons why disadvantaged youth do not enroll in vocational programs listed student attitudes toward vocational education as one of the main barriers (Parsons et al., 1975; Simcoe, 1979). Both reports specifically recommended future research was needed to determine the relationship of what vocational educators said to what students' actual attitudes were.

In Education and the Disadvantaged American, the National Association of Educational Policies Commission (1962) describes the value of vocational education for the

disadvantaged in the following manner:

> A stronger program of vocational education can serve several important purposes. Opportunities to learn job skills are relatively easy for the pupil to value. They can increase his interest in school. They can help him to consider himself a useful and respected person. They can develop the initiative and sense of responsibility that are basic to preparation for college as well as for new jobs. (p. 18)

Summary and Conclusions

The major concern of this review of the literature has been to accent the variables pertinent to the problem of this study. The important concepts that have been emphasized throughout this discussion have been as follows:

1. That attitudes are learned, predispositions to respond toward attitude objects, and that these attitudes because they are learned are subject to change.

2. That even though the relationship between attitude and behavior may not be causative it may be facilitative.

3. That disadvantaged youth, by nature of their disadvantagement, may have attitudes which do not allow them to consider vocational education as a viable alternative to the other high school programs.

4. That knowing the magnitude and direction of attitudes can be the first step in nurturing positive attitudes toward vocational education.

5. That the limited research concerning attitudes of disadvantaged youth toward vocational education is not conclusive enough to determine if it is their attitudes

which may be preventing them from enrolling in the program.

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